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SAFEGUARDING YOUR FOOD AND DRUG SUPPLY---No. 35

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A radio talk by W. W. Vincent, chief of the western district, Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered over KGO, San Francisco, and associated National Broadcasting Company stations, at 12:45 p.m., February 19, 1931.

MR. LAMB: Folks, your next speaker is Mr. W. W. Vincent, Chief of the Western District, of the Federal Food and Drug Administration. From all over the United States, Mr. Vincent is receiving communications asking for this "Read-the-Label" information that he is giving you each week. Last week he talked about berries. He promised to talk of vegetables today. That's a pretty broad field. Tell me, Mr. Vincent, what phase of the vegetable business did you intend to cover today?

MR. VINCENT: Well, there are a lot of folks in this western country who are engaged in the production of beans. There are a lot of bean eaters, particularly among men who have seen service in the Army or the Navy. I guess I'd better talk of beans. They are an important food. The dried edible bean crop of the United States annually returns the farmers something over 50 million dollars. Large quantities of string beans are canned throughout the West and enormous quantities of dried beans are imported. The Food and Drug Administration devotes considerable attention to beans. I shall tell you something of canned bean products.

MR. LAMB: Your reference to the war reminds me of something--- let me think--- Oh, yes, didn't you food and drug people stop importations of some beans from India, or some place in the Orient, during the war? As I recall they were considered poisonous.

MR. VINCENT: We did. Your Food and Drug Administration throughout the entire war period devoted considerable attention to the examination of all importations of beans. These particular beans are known as Burma beans, and every lot of them was examined. They contain hydrocyanic acid in varying amounts and hydrocyanic acid is a poison. Cases are on record in some foreign countries of fatal results from eating these beans when they happened to contain unusually large amounts of the poison. Those Burma beans originated in the East Indian colonies. They are known by various names, such as Indian, Kava, Kratok, Moon, or Rangoon beans. They belong to the lima bean family, but more closely resemble small white or navy beans. The world demand for beans was great and it was but a short time after our entry into the war when large quantities of these beans were being offered in the United States. Immediately this was learned, the importers were notified such beans would be refused admittance to the country until such time as their hydrocyanic-acid content could be determined and, if such acid were present in appreciable amount, the beans would be forbidden entry in accordance with the terms of the food and drugs act. It was not long before we had numerous importations under detention, and foreign shippers were resorting to unusual tactics in an effort to get those beans into the United States. But they didn't get many by your Food and Drug Administration.

MR. LAMB: By the way, Mr. Vincent, those Burma beans are by no chance related to the soybean, are they?

MR. VINCENT: No. The soybean is probably native to China. It is quite an unusual bean. It has a high protein content, around 34%--- a high fat or oil content, about 17%--- and it differs from all other beans in that it possesses but a slight trace of starch. Next to rice, soybeans are the second most important food plant in the Orient. Unlike other beans, they are eaten boiled only to a small extent. Orientals generally mix them in various ways with other products of starchy character. Soy sauce, or Shoyu, a mixture of cooked soybeans with roasted wheat flour and salt--- fermented sometimes for years in casks with a special ferment and the resulting thick brown liquid having a pungent and agreeable taste---is probably the best known soybean product to reach the United States. The soybean is cultivated in this country, but primarily as a forage or cover crop for soil enrichment. Americans don't care particularly for soybeans as food, but in England and Holland a soya flour is sold generally. Roughly, this flour contains 25% soybean meal and 75% wheat flour. Soya biscuits made from this flour constitute an article of export from England.

MR. LAMB: Now, we are half around the world. Suppose we get back to the bean-eaters of the U.S.A.

MR. VINCENT: First, I want to tell you a story of an adroit bean canner of San Francisco. It was during the war. Beans had increased materially in price. This canner, not ordinarily engaged in packing beans, conceived an idea. He did a little experimenting. His experiments were successful and he decided to revolutionize the pork and bean business. He started packing soybeans. Because they contained little or no starch, he added a small amount in order that the product within the can would not be too watery. He neglected to state upon his label that the product was soybeans. He did indicate that "Thelma Brand Pork and Beans," as he called them, were "Unexcelled as a Nutritious and Palatable Food Product." He said, further, that they "contained only 5% of starch." The Federal Notices of Judgment tell you what happened to his shipments once they began to move in interstate commerce. They were seized. The article was adulterated. Soybeans had been substituted for navy beans. The article was further held to be misbranded. The labeling conveyed the impression the said beans were navy beans, whereas they were soybeans, and thus was the consumer deceived and misled. That manufacturer did not contest the case. He admitted the allegations of the libel, secured his goods under bond and relabeled them, indicating their true nature. It is by actions such as this that the food and drugs act guarantees the integrity and truthful labeling of your food supply. The act also protects the ethical manufacturer from unfair competition.

MR. LAMB: Well, that's interesting. Just one more question, Mr. Vincent, before you tell these people what they need to know about the labels on canned beans. What is succotash?

MR. VINCENT: Succotash, originally, was composed of green sweet corn and green string beans. Commercially, the canned product generally consists of green sweet corn and soaked lima beans. If dried beans or dried corn be soaked and used in the product, the label will so indicate,

or if beans other than limas are used, the label should tell you.

Now, for canned beans in general. Canned fresh beans and canned dried beans are available. The fresh class includes the string beans-- "stringless," they are sometimes labeled--- also the wax beans and the fresh, or "Green Lima," beans. The dried class covers "Pork and Beans," the red kidney beans, baked beans, and the "Soaked" lima beans.

Canned string beans come to you in two styles of packs, an "Asparagus Style," wherein the beans are packed tightly lengthwise of the can. This is a fancy product of uniform length. The actual drained weight of beans when packed "Asparagus Style" is somewhat greater than when packed in the ordinary style. String beans, in their preparation, usually have the stems and tips removed. In the cutting, the "fiber" or string is largely removed. Under commercial conditions, it is impossible to remove all strings. The more mature the beans, the more difficult it is to remove the fiber. When labeled, "Stringless," you may expect beans of good quality and reasonably free from strings. Varieties are sometimes declared. You will recall the names "Kentucky Wonder," and "Refugee." "Refugee" applies to a general class of string beans, including three or four distinct varieties. Varieties slowest in developing fibrous character are classed as "Stringless."

"Green Lima Beans," are those canned while in the fresh or succulent stage. Such a product should contain few, if any, white beans, even though they be fresh. Such white fresh Limas you may expect to receive where labels read, "Lima Beans," unqualified, or "Fresh Lima Beans." If dried limas are soaked and then canned, the labels will read "Soaked Lima Beans," or bear some equivalent expression. Such labels should bear no pictorial design indicating that fresh beans, or beans in a succulent stage, have been used. The term "Baby Lima" is varietal and has no reference to whether the beans were canned in the fresh condition or soaked dry beans were used.

In the canning of string beans, wax beans and fresh lima beans, it is customary to add brine. Accordingly, your Food and Drug Administration has established certain drained weight requirements for such beans. Each respective size of tin needs to contain a definite weight of beans. Too much brine is bad for your pocketbook, if purchased at the price of beans.

In "Baked Beans," "Pork and Beans," or "Canned Beans," you will get the white beans of commerce. They may be any of the several varieties often referred to as navy beans, for example--- or the "Pea Bean," grown largely in Michigan--- the large or small white bean of California--- the "Great Northern" of the mountain states, Montana, Idaho and Wyoming--- or the Kotonashi, the white bean of the Orient. Cans labeled, "Red Beans," unqualified, may contain the "Pink Bean" of California, the Mexican or California red bean, the "Red Marrow" bean, or the "Kintoki," the red bean of the Orient. If you want "Red Kidney Beans," considered a superior product, be certain the label specifies "Kidney Beans."

Now for "Pork and Beans." They come to you with or without tomato sauce. Not much pork in this product. No one expects much. Pork is used primarily for flavor value. Where the words, "Baked Beans," "Oven Baked

Beans," or "Baked Pork and Beans" appear, the beans should have been "oven-baked" before placed in the can for sterilization. In their preparation, some molasses is frequently added before baking. This contributes to the desired flavor. The terms, "Boston Style," and "New England Style," designate beans so prepared and without the addition of tomato sauce.

If the word, "Baked," is omitted from the label, you may know that the beans have probably first been parboiled, or else the dry beans have just been placed in the can and such real cooking as accorded was for the sterilization of the canned product.

Remember, a net weight statement appears upon the label of all canned beans. A comparison of weight statements will assist in telling you which are the best buys.

Well, folks- a long time since I talked about drugs-- everybody gets a headache occasionally. Next week I guess I will talk of headache remedies and some veterinary products. I will tell you a story. By the way, do you like these talks of mine? If so, why don't you write and get my "Read-the-Label" information on the many products of which I have spoken. It will assist in making you a discriminating buyer.

That's all today.

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